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ACTION EA-13

INFO OCT-01 SS-14 PM-03 INR-05 INRE-00 CIAE-00 NSAE-00

NSCE-00 NSC-10 PRS-01 DODE-00 USIE-00 L-02 OMB-01

SSO-00 CCO-00 RSR-01 RSC-01 /052 W

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O P 050600Z JUN 72 ZFF-4
FM AMEMBASSY PHNOM PENH
TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 7591
INFO AMEMBASSY BANGKOK PRIORITY
AMEMBASSY SAIGON PRIORITY
AMEMBASSY VIENTIANE PRIORITY
CINCPAC PRIORITY
USDEL FRANCE PRIORITY
AMCONSUL HONG KONG PRIORITY

DEPARTMENT OF STATE A/CDC/MR
REVIEWED BY Turkley DATE 10/4/80
RDS EXT. DATE
REASON(S)
ENFORCE EXISTING MARKINGS ☐
DECLASSIFIED/RELEASABLE ☒
RELEASE DENIED ☐
FA or FOI EXEMPTIONS

Phnom Penh 3453

C O N F I D E N T I A L PHNOM PENH 3453

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SUBJECT: PRESIDENTIAL ELECTIONS IN CAMBODIA

1. SUMMARY. WITH RETURNS STILL INCOMPLETE, IT APPEARS THAT MARSHAL LON NOL HAS WON AND WILL HOLD ONTO A NARROW VICTORY IN THE PRESIDENTIAL ELECTIONS. THE SURPRISING SIZE OF THE OPPOSITION MOST DOUBTLESS REFLECTS A REAL AND WIDESPREAD DISSATISFACTION WITH THE WAR AND THE PRESENT LEADERSHIP. END SUMMARY.

2. MARSHAL LON NOL RECEIVED RANKING MEMBERS OF THE EMBASSY TODAY AT A CEREMONY AT WHICH HE DECORATED POLITICAL-MILITARY COUNSELOR LADD FOR SERVICES RENDERED TO THE KHMER REPUBLIC DURING THE PAST TWO YEARS. THE MARSHAL WAS SURROUNDED BY HIS PRINCIPAL MILITARY ADVISERS AND WAS IN A RELAXED MOOD DESPITE THE EVIDENT CLOSENESS OF THE PRESIDENTIAL ELECTION HELD JUNE 4.

(1)

3. THE MARSHAL HIMSELF INTRODUCED THE TOPIC OF

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ELECTIONS AND PROVIDED US WITH THE MOST CURRENT STATISTICS. WITH SOME 658,000 OF THE VOTES TABULATED, THE MARSHAL HAS APPARENTLY 54 PERCENT, IN TAM 26 PERCENT, AND KEO AN NINETEEN PERCENT. SEVERAL PROVINCES HAVE NOT REPORTED, AND IT IS EXPECTED THAT THE VOTE WILL EVENTUALLY TOTAL IN THE NEIGHBORHOOD OF 900,000 AS COMPARED WITH 1.65 MILLION REPORTEDLY CAST IN THE RECENT REFERENDUM ON THE CONSTITUTION.

4. THE MARSHAL NOTED THAT IT IS UNCERTAIN WHETHER THE PROVINCES NOT AS YET REPORTING WILL HAVE THE EFFECT OF INCREASING OR DECREASING HIS MARGIN. CONTRASTING VIEWS WERE EXPRESSED AT THE MEETING, WITH THE MORE PESSIMISTIC PROGNOSIS BEING A DECLINE OF HIS PERCENTAGE FROM 54 TO 51 PERCENT. FEW SEEMED TO BELIEVE HE WILL RECEIVE LESS THAN AN ABSOLUTE MAJORITY. IF HE SHOULD, FURTHER BALLOTING BETWEEN HIMSELF AND THE RUNNER-UP WOULD BE NECESSARY.

5. ALTHOUGH HE MUST UNDOUBTEDLY HAVE BEEN PRIVATELY CHAGRINED AT THESE RESULTS, THE MARSHAL GAVE NO PUBLIC SIGN OF CONCERN. HE ASSERTED THAT HE HAD CONSCIOUSLY FOLLOWED A POLICY OF NON-COERCION IN THE ELECTIONS. HE SAID HE HAD WANTED TO LET THE PEOPLE EXPRESS THEMSELVES AS FREELY AS POSSIBLE.

6. COMMENT: WITH THE RETURNS NOT FULLY IN FROM SUCH PROVINCES AS KOMPONG CHHNANG AND KOMPONG SPEU, ANY OVERALL ANALYSIS OF ELECTION RESULTS IS PREMATURE. ON THE POSITIVE SIDE, IT CAN BE STATED THAT DESPITE CERTAIN PRESSURES AND NUMEROUS IRRSGULARITIES, THE DETAILS OF WHICH WILL NEVER BE COMPLETE, THE FIRST REAL ELECTIONS IN CAMBODIA SINCE 1966 WERE A SUCCESSFUL EXAMPLE OF THE DEMOCRATIC PROCESS AT WORK. ON THE NEGATIVE SIDE, THE VOTE REFLECTS A WIDESPREAD AND THEREFORE SIGNIFICANT DISAFFECTION FROM THE CURRENT STATE OF AFFAIRS, WHETHER IT BE THE LON NOL LEADERSHIP, THE WAR, RISING PRICES, OR THE PERCEIVED FUTILITY AND HOPELESSNESS OF A SITUATION WHICH IS IN MANY RESPECTS BEYOND KHMER CONTROL AND INFLUENCE. IT APPEARS THAT IN TAM DID PARTICULARLY WELL IN THE CAPITAL WHERE POPULAR DISAFFECTION FROM THE GOVERNMENT HAS BEEN APPARENT

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FOR MONTHS. THE FACT THAT ALMOST ONE IN FIVE VOTERS CAST HIS BALLOT FOR KEO AN, WHOSE PRINCIPAL PLANK WAS THAT HE WOULD PERMIT SIHANOUK TO RETURN (IN A PRIVATE CAPACITY), WILL BE GENERALLY INTERPRETED AS INDICATIVE OF THE RESIDUAL DRAWING POWER OF THE PRINE IN CAMBODIAN POLITICS. FURTHERMORE, IF THE VOTE REACHES ONLY 900,000, IT WILL MEAN THAT ABSTENTIONS FROM VOTING WRE IN THE SEVERAL HUNDRED THOUSANDS. ABSTENTIONS ON THIS SCALE COULD ALSO INDICATE SIGNIFICANT POPULAR DISAFFECTION.

7. IT THUS SEEMS LIKELY THAT LON NOL WILL BE CONTINUED IN OFFICE BUT WITH WHAT IN EFFECT IS ONLY MINORITY SUPPORT. IT IS TOO EARLY TO PREDICT WHAT STEPS HE WILL TAKE TO COUNTER THE OPPOSITION OR TO BRING INTO GREATER ACCORD WITH HIS POLICIES. HE DID NOT ADDRESS THESE QUESTIONS IN HIS TALK WITH US THIS MORNING, ALTHOUGH THEY MUST HAVE BEEN UPPERMOST IN HIS MIND.

8. THE FORMAL RESULTS OF THE ELECTIONS ARE EXPECTED TO BE ANNOUNCED EITHER LATE TOMORROW JUNE 6 OR EARLY JUNE 7.
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